

ELECTRONIC COMMERCE USING A TRANSACTION NETWORK

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

The present invention is directed to a transaction network that facilitates and simplifies purchase transactions between any number of customers and any number of merchants. The transaction network is primarily utilized in the sale and purchase of digital content via a network such as the Internet. The transaction network registers and authenticates customer purchase activities and maintains customer account data including payment information. Once registered, a customer will generally not register again for further purchase activities at participating merchant sites. Additionally, the transaction network provides a single, central authentication mechanism for all participating merchant sites using a single customer identifier and password. Further, the transaction network accumulates purchase information across all of the merchant sites and the ultimate payment processing of those purchase transactions. Payment processing generally occurs on a periodic basis, enabling the accumulation of multiple purchase transactions within a participating customer's account. The network additionally preferably provides customers with centralized, automated services for customer account management, product refunds, subscription management, and multiple purchasing accounts linked to the same payment account.